



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEWS
The Monthly Electronic Newsletter of
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STATE TO RECEIVE FEDERAL AID FOR FLOOD – Just four days after Governor John Lynch requested federal emergency assistance, President Bush ordered a Presidential Disaster Declaration for Individual Assistance in six New Hampshire counties badly damaged by flooding. The declared counties are: Belknap, Carroll, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham, and Strafford. The declaration makes residents of the six counties eligible for a wide range of programs such as funding for temporary disaster housing assistance, U.S. Small Business Administration low-interest loans for individuals and businesses to repair or replace damaged property, grants for serious disaster-related needs and expenses not covered by insurance or other assistance programs and disaster unemployment assistance.

Governor Lynch requested the aid in response to flooding caused by a spring storm beginning on May 12th that dumped more than a foot of rain over most of the state. By some measures, such as river flow, it was a 100-year storm. A Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) by teams from FEMA and BEM found 25 homes destroyed, 235 with serious damage and 4,896 with minor damage in the six counties. A second PDA, by FEMA, BEM and the N.H. Department of Transportation, was conducted of public infrastructure in Belknap, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham and Strafford counties.

GOVERNOR LYNCH HOSTS PANDEMIC FLU SUMMIT – Governor John Lynch signed a Memorandum of Understanding with U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt Friday morning (May 26th) that will bring the state an \$813,000 planning grant to combat pandemic flu. The agreement capped off a state Pandemic Planning Summit in Manchester that brought together several hundred federal, state, local and private sector representatives from public health, emergency management and other disciplines.

Secretary Leavitt told the session that a pandemic flu is a possibility, though not a certainty in the near future. But if it occurred it would be a catastrophic event. Leavitt noted that Hurricane Katrina was over after a few “hellish days.” Then, the rest of the country was able to assist the stricken states. He said a pandemic would strike everyone at once, so outside help to any area would be impossible. “Any community that fails to prepare with the expectation that the federal government will come to the rescue will be sadly mistaken,” he said.

Governor Lynch noted that New Hampshire had already conducted a statewide pandemic flu exercise and, he said, planning and preparation will continue at the state and local levels. He said the state was committed to do everything needed to prepare and has already developed a comprehensive pandemic response plan.

TORNADO STRIKES ON I-95 – Two Maine men had a near-Wizard of Oz experience on Sunday, May 21st when their pickup truck was picked up, flipped over and tossed about 50 feet by a tornado. The two had stopped along the highway to watch a funnel cloud in the area and had just returned to their vehicle when the twister headed straight for them. The cap to the pickup and a kayak they were carrying landed in nearby trees. They were taken to Exeter Hospital, but were not seriously injured.

John Jensenius, Warning Coordination Meteorologist at the Gray, Maine, office of the National Weather Service, investigated the incident. Based on the evidence supplied by eyewitnesses and the debris pattern left behind, he concluded that it was an F2 tornado on the Fujita Scale, with maximum winds of between 120 and 130 mph. The twister snapped and uprooted trees, but caused no damage to homes or other structures. It was part of a storm front that moved through the state that evening, causing thunderstorms and hail in some areas.

HURRICANE SEASON IS BACK – The Atlantic hurricane season officially begins June 1st and it could be another bad one. Forecasters are predicting a season that may produce about double the number of storms as the average for the second half of the 20th Century. In their annual predictions for the hurricane season, researchers at Colorado State University are calling for 17 named storms, compared with 9.6 for the period 1950-2000; nine hurricanes, compared with 5.9 for the same and five intense hurricanes, compared with an average of 2.3. They also put the probability of a Category 3-5 hurricane striking the East Coast (including Peninsular Florida) at 64 percent. That compares with the average probability for the last century of 31 percent.

The Colorado State projections have been reasonably accurate in the past, but they only indicate the probability of hurricanes occurring in the total Atlantic region. They do not predict where hurricanes will strike. New England is most vulnerable to hurricanes from mid-August through the end of September.

HURRICANE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE – There are plenty of resources on hurricanes available for emergency managers and the public. BEM is planning to do its annual hurricane tracking chart promotion with WMUR-TV. During active storms WMUR meteorologists will mention that viewers can receive a hurricane tracking chart by sending their name and address to Hurricanes, Emergency Management, 33 Hazen Drive, Concord 03305, or by e-mail to hurricanes@nhoem.state.nh.us. Additional information is available at the BEM website, www.nhoem.state.nh.us, or from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at www.ready.gov.

FEMA NAMES NEW REGIONAL DIRECTOR – FEMA has a new regional director for Region I in Boston. Arthur Cleaves, director of the Maine Emergency Management Agency, was appointed to the regional post, effective May 28th. Cleaves has been director at Maine Emergency Management since 1999. FEMA's Region I includes all six New England states.

N.E. SUMMER ELECTRIC POWER SUPPLY TO BE TIGHT – ISO-New England, the region's wholesale power distributor, says power supplies will be adequate for normal summer demand, but an extended heat wave could trigger conservation measures, such as voltage reductions, or even rolling blackouts. ISO-New England officials announced their summer power demand projections at a meeting in Holyoke, Mass. Their forecast said demand would reach 27,025 megawatts (MW) of power on at least one day this summer under normal weather conditions. That is defined as 90 degrees Fahrenheit. But an extended heat wave of 95 degrees or more could bring demand to 28,785 MW. The record power demand for the region, set on July 27, 2005, was 26,885 MW.

ISO-New England says the region's electricity demand continues to grow while the construction of new generating capacity has stagnated.

UNUSUAL EVENT DECLARED AT VY – Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant declared an Unusual Event at 9:02 p.m. on Wednesday, May 24th when fire alarms associated with a circuit breaker went off. Smoke, but no fire, was detected by the plant's automatic fire suppression system in an electrical circuit room on the non-nuclear side of the facility. VY's on-site fire brigade responded to the incident. The Vernon Fire Department was notified, but no on-site response was needed. Rescue, Inc., of Brattleboro responded to the scene as a precaution. Control room operators reduced the plant's power output to 57 percent. It will be returned to full power when an analysis of the incident has been completed and any necessary repairs are made.

An Unusual Event is the lowest of four emergency classification levels for nuclear power plants. BEM was notified of the incident within minutes, but no action was required by the agency.